

MANAGERIAL SELF-AWARENESS AND ITS IMPACT ON LEADERSHIP IN HIGH-
PERFORMING MANAGERS

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Managerial self-awareness is thought to impact leadership. A multi-rater feedback instrument was used to gather performance data on 70 managers in a large multi-national airline in regards to five leadership dimensions: making sound decisions, driving for results, effective communication, self-management, and innovation. Difference scores between self and direct reports were calculated and used as the operational definition of managerial self-awareness. T-tests were run to examine the difference between high performers and average performers. No significant differences were found. Additionally, correlational measures between the five leadership competencies and the managerial self-awareness measure indicated statistically weak relationships.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Leadership

In the ever-evolving corporate landscape, strong leadership is fast becoming a necessity for businesses to survive (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Companies are merging, acquiring other organizations, integrating new technologies, and changing in an environment where the act of change increases the chance of failure. In this world of chaos and change, leadership is no exception (Rifkin, 1996). Complexity and choice are monumental concerns in solving problems in the modern business world, which has increased the amount of attention placed on leadership.

With an increased emphasis on leadership, there has also been much argument around exactly what defines leadership and how it differs from management. Management is having responsibilities and accomplishing goals efficiently and correctly. In other words, it is comprised of activities that keep an organization running (Huey, 1994). Leadership is a role of influencing others and guiding them in the correct direction to effectiveness (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Leadership is a broader concept than management as it involves more than directing others towards organizational goals. A leader invokes vision, purpose, and cohesion (Cohn, 1998). However, contrary to what many hold to be true, this is not a rare skill, nor does it require charisma.

The paradigm that great leaders are born and not created is another myth no longer held to be true. In Bass and Stogdill's integrative review of over 100 leadership studies, the results suggested that leaders do not have certain traits that distinguish them

from non-leaders (Bass, 1990). Instead, researchers have focused on identifying the attributes such as behaviors, skills, abilities and competencies that are critical to effective leadership in various contexts (Sashkin, 1987).

Three leadership skills that need to be in place for managers to create a successful organization are establishing direction, aligning people, and motivating and inspiring (Cohn, 1998). At the organizational level, the critical areas of activity involve developing strategies to produce desired changes, and communicating in order to create commitment.

In an age where information technology is causing old structures and hierarchies to crumble, “virtual leadership is about keeping everyone focused. As the power of position continues to erode, corporate leaders are going to resemble not so much captains of ships as candidates running for office. They will face two fundamental tasks: first, to develop and articulate exactly what the company is trying to accomplish, and second, to create an environment in which employees can figure out what needs to be done and then do it well” (Huey, 1994, pg 2). Part of this new leadership role is creating an environment where people are no longer protecting knowledge, as they did in hierarchical organizations because it was their claim to distinction.

In other words, management/leadership is becoming less tangible, which puts pressure on leaders to deal more effectively with choice and complexity, in an environment where knowledge is an economic resource. Knowledge key to a viable company includes “explicit” data and statistics, as in the past; however, more importantly “tacit” knowledge, or an inner sense is necessary. This elusive intuition or instinct is described as being a key skill for leaders in the future (White, Hodgson, & Crainer,

1996). It comes from inner strength and having the resilience to maintain energy in the face of opposition.

In the White, et al (1996) model of leadership, self-awareness is said to be the foundation of tacit knowledge. Self-awareness involves leaders being aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and possessing the ability to be frank and honest about them. This provides a vital reference point when placed in difficult business situations. Self-awareness in this study is defined as the practice of reflecting on and accurately assessing one's own behaviors and skills as they are manifested in the workplace.

Leadership training now includes self-awareness as a key management trait and thousands of dollars are being spent on incorporating this concept (Sosik & Megerian, 1999). However, questions arise on how well that money is being spent. Self-awareness must be linked to improved leadership performance to justify costs of expensive multi-rater initiatives. A better understanding of the rating process in general is also a desirable outcome of studying self-awareness (Church, 1997).

A very limited number of empirical studies have attempted to link managerial self-awareness to leadership. Three key studies that have dealt with this issue will be reviewed and expanded on (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992; Church, 1997; Van Velsor, Taylor, & Leslie, 1993). These studies have small sample sizes and somewhat conflicting results, which necessitates further research.

This paper will expand on previous definitions of self-awareness and explicate leading theories of the origin and nature of this competency. The effects of self-awareness on leadership in a corporate setting will be demonstrated using a multi-source

appraisal system. Specifically, managerial self-awareness will be linked to leadership effectiveness.

Feedback

As mentioned above, it is important for managers to be aware of the leadership strengths and weaknesses they have so they can leverage the positive aspects of their managerial style to compensate for what they are lacking. They must also strive to improve areas that are necessary to do the job well. Receiving feedback is an essential element in this process. Feedback has been shown to increase the performance of managers by motivating individuals to improve and by directing them to strategies that can be used to improve performance (Ashford & Tsui, 1991). Various tools have been developed to assist in this process.

About 90 percent of Fortune 1000 organizations are using some form of multi-source assessment (Atwater & Waldman, 1998). Although this figure seems inflated, it is clear that the traditional performance reviews where one supervisor assesses a subordinate is no longer seen as the most effective way to evaluate the performance of a manager in corporate America. The method that has been gaining credibility and is becoming the most popular technique (Church & Bracken, 1997) is called multi-rater feedback. This method is also referred to as upward appraisal, 360-feedback, multi-source appraisal, peer review and full-circle feedback (Atwater & Waldman, 1998).

These terms all generally apply to the same process, which involves an array of raters providing feedback (by filling out a standardized questionnaire) to the assessee on

how they can improve their performance (Jeanneret & Silzer, 1998). Raters can include peers, co-workers, team members, self, supervisors, and internal and external customers.

The person being assessed is generally a management level employee, because they are exposed to and provide service for a large number of people. The underlying assumption of this technique is that the accuracy and scope of the assessment of an individual increases when consulting a full circle of daily business contacts, as opposed to only one supervisor. The multi-rater assessment is a measure of where a person stands, and is a tool to help point to discrepancy and improve future behavior.

Some have asserted that the extra effort to obtain data from multiple sources can be in vain, because there will still be the potential for halo effects and ratings not being reflective of the dimensions used (Fletcher, Baldry & Cunningham-Snell, 1998).

However, overall, the view of most practitioners is that the use of more raters leads to more accurate results for the individual, particularly when criterion deficiency is reduced by capturing information not obtained by other methods (Church & Bracken, 1997; Campbell & Lee, 1988). This process, as opposed to the more traditional performance reviews, which involve only one rater, provides a more global and accurate view of the performance. This is due in part to central tendency, where combined scores are closer to true scores. There is also an increased opportunity to observe behavior because of more people contributing more data, which leads to greater accuracy.

The multi-rater technique does provide a fuller conceptualization and measurement of job performance considered by most to be fairer than traditional supervisor evaluations (Bozeman, 1997). However, different rater groups frequently vary

in how they rate the individual manager (Borman, 1974; Zalesny & Kirsch, 1989). According to the traditional definitions of validity and reliability, poor inter-rater agreement indicates the assessment has low reliability and therefore low validity (Bozeman, 1997).

However, the perspectives that the raters have of the individual manager being assessed can vary quite dramatically. It has been argued that because different groups draw from different experiences, inter-rater agreement is not expected and does not necessarily point to the ineffectiveness of the instrument. The opposite has been asserted to be true; high disagreement among different rater groups may imply predictability and possibly validity (Buckner, 1959; Briggs & Cheek, 1988).

Intra-rater agreement, however, is expected and does point to an instrument that is reliable and valid. The various groups are said to see the manager in similar situations, and therefore each group is drawing from the same basic information in rating the manager. Harris & Schaubroeck (1988) conducted a meta-analysis of self-supervisor, self-peer, and peer-supervisor ratings. They found that peers, supervisors and subordinate ratings are more likely to be related to each other than self-ratings are to ratings by others.

This may be due in part to evaluators employing schemas (cognitive categories) to judge the performance of others. During the appraisal process raters may rely on a schema that is not a true reflection of the ratee's performance. Inter-rater agreement would only be found if evaluators are drawing from similar cognitive schemas. Specific

behaviors that are considered are also likely to be interpreted by different people in different ways (Campbell & Lee, 1988).

The increase of popularity of the multi-rater process has led to research on biases of self-rating. The way a manager rates him or herself, however, has little to do with the validity or reliability of the test. In fact, the self/rater relationship remains empirically unclear, largely because self-ratings are unreliable indicators of behavior (Van Velsor et al., 1993; Atwater & Yammarino, 1992). This is partially due to a self-serving bias, where individuals tend to take credit for successes and attribute failure to external factors.

This discrepancy in the way the self and others rate a person's behavior is perceived as being the essence of the multi-rater technique. The misalignment is brought to the attention of the ratee, which in turn allows them to change behaviors in the future. This is critical when the behaviors highlighted are required for success in the job.

The self-other difference also helps explore the area of self-awareness. Self-awareness can be defined as the trait or ability that allows a person to assess his or her behavior and skills (Church, 1997). The managers who are more likely to assess their competencies accurately are those who are more aware of the job they are doing as a manager. They are able to decipher how others view them and therefore alter their future behavior accordingly. This definition of self-awareness will be expanded on later in this paper.

First, the way managers receive input from others will be considered. The job of a manager can be ambiguous and rely heavily on the manager's ability to deal effectively with ambiguity. As a manager moves up in an organization this vagueness of what is

expected often increases due to an increase in responsibilities, and a wider variety of roles they are expected to play. This makes it more difficult for a manager to decide what to do in any given situation (Ashford & Tsui, 1991). It also becomes more difficult to obtain feedback from others, as many become unwilling to offer feedback to those in the upper echelon of the organization. However, obtaining feedback is essential to remain cognizant of how one's performance is perceived.

Feedback from sources such as everyday conversation with others, monthly and yearly performance reviews, and tools such as multi-rater instruments has long been thought to increase the performance of managers by both motivating individuals to improve and directing them to areas of competence to focus on (Ashford & Tsui, 1991). Feedback can provide managers with an accurate sense of how they are perceived by others.

A quarterly review is not enough feedback for the contemporary manager to rely on for career standing and direction. It is necessary for managers to take an active role in seeking feedback from others. Because this critical element becomes more difficult as one moves up in the organization, many managers respond by seeking out feedback whenever possible. Self-regulation as a manager involves setting standards, detecting discrepancies, and in turn reducing the discrepancies.

There are implications for those who do actively seek input from others. The manner in which one seeks out information can be important in how that person is perceived. It has been found that managers that seek negative feedback are seen in a more favorable light than the managers that are exclusively interested in obtaining positive

feedback. Impression management associated with active feedback seeking increases the perceived manager's effectiveness (Ashford & Tsui, 1991).

In response to a request for feedback, those rating the manager consider a myriad of factors. Some of these factors have been said to have an effect on the way a ratee perceives the manager and therefore the feedback they give. A correlation was found between liking someone and a leniency effect in feedback where the managers that are liked better were rated as higher performers (Tsui & Barry, 1986). Dependability (Gilbert & Whiteside, 1988) is also noted as a characteristic that influences ratee judgement.

In a study of the effects of ratee task performance and interpersonal factors on peer and supervisor ratings, a multi-rater assessment was used and interpersonal dimensions were gathered using cognitive ability and interpersonal factor rating scales. Dependability/Trustworthiness and Technical Proficiency were found to impact performance ratings more than any other variables (such as cognitive ability and irritability), particularly for supervisors. Interpersonal factors such as friendliness or likeability did not significantly impact performance ratings. (Borman, White, & Dorsey, 1995). It can be concluded that ratee personal characteristics are important for supervisor and peer ratings. The present study does not attempt to discover which ratee variables influence manager ratings. Instead, it will focus on the influence of the target manager's self-awareness.

Managerial Self-Awareness

Developmental assessments such as the multi-rater technique are designed with the underlying assumption that awareness of any discrepancy in how others see us and

the perception of ourselves will lead to a greater degree of self-awareness, which in turn enhances leadership behaviors. To understand this supposition, we must explore what self-awareness is and the potential effects it has on job performance.

The definition of self-awareness is derived from work done by early developmental psychologists. Piaget (1928) asserted that the child is an egocentric being who is unknowingly bound to the individual perspective. The perspectives of other people are largely ignored and are not of valid concern. There is then a gradual progression from the initial egocentric viewpoint to a more socially aware point of view. The child learns to take the role of the other in social interaction; before this occurs, the self is viewed as an object (Mead, 1934).

The child learns to take the role of the other in a process that is often referred to as “role taking.” This involves giving more attention to the needs, intentions, opinions, emotions, and intellectual capabilities of others. These are all characteristics necessary for a child to be an astute communicator. Information is gathered by the child through perceptions made in the past, as well as the current behavior of the individual, both deliberately and subconsciously (Flavell, Botkin & Fry, 1968).

The child that is not actively taking part in this role taking behavior is not able to be an effective communicator (Piaget, 1928), because the concept of one’s “point of view” is absent. Intellectual egocentrism can be defined as the inability to take other roles. The ability to search for the opinions of others and compare them to their own viewpoint in order to make comparisons is absent, and therefore hinders almost every part of the child’s life.

According to Flavell et. al (1968), the ability to assess what another person's capabilities and tendencies in a given situation are, paired with the ability to use this information to communicate more effectively is a skill that is developed with age. The exact process that a child goes through to obtain this awareness is still unclear to researchers.

The earliest developmental studies focused on the ability to correctly discriminate emotions from facial expressions. It was found that the ability to correctly distinguish emotions increases with age (Gates, 1923; Walton, 1936). However, this does not indicate the developmental process one goes through, nor does it imply if the information gathered could be integrated in how the child then communicated with the person.

Other studies attempted to determine when the role-taking ability develops, and the results all point to a child being fairly adept at determining the point of view of others between the ages of 10 and 11 (Elkind, 1962; Piaget, 1928). The concept of "inference," where underlying contextual and perceptual cues are used by the child to ascribe motives to others' behaviors as well as the notion "concept," which is the attempt to account for inconsistencies in the actions of others, were examined in Gollin's 1958 study. It was found that these skills were dependent on intelligence, social class and gender (with females outperforming males). It can be concluded that characteristics of social judgement are a function of developmental phase, with a dramatic increase in ability from age 10 to age 16.

The shift from intellectual egocentrism to consideration of the perspective of the “other” that occurs in childhood is crucial to the manner in which a person perceives the self. It manifests itself in thought patterns and communication with others.

Mead (1934) argues that to be aware of one’s selfhood, the person must first detach awareness from the inside of oneself and use the exterior vantage point of another person. Taking the role of the other is necessary in this framework, as the context of the self consists of the perception of the social other.

Duval and Wicklund’s (1972) theory of objective self-awareness takes exception to Mead’s theory by postulating that “self-consciousness occurs because consciousness can focus its attention on the self in the same way that attention is focused on any object.” In no way is it assumed that the individual is dependent upon the point of view of the other in the sense that Mead intends. “If the object-like nature of the self has been discovered, and stimuli in the environment are such that consciousness turns in the direction of the self, the person will become objectively self-aware” (Duval & Wicklund, p. 31, 1972).

In other words, a person does not need to use the point of view of another person to be self-conscious. Instead, the mature individual has one innate consciousness able to focus on different directions. Duval and Wicklund (1972) define objective self-awareness as the state in which the self is the object of consciousness. On the other hand, subjective self-awareness is the state in which the self is not the focus of consciousness. It is easy to see the echoes of the early work of Piaget, Flavell, Duval, and Mead in the current empirical studies on the concept of self-awareness.

The multi-rater technique has allowed researchers to study the concept of self-awareness from an empirical, business standpoint. The term self-aware can be deceiving. To be truly self-aware a manager must not only be cognizant of the thoughts, feelings and limitations of himself, he must also be aware of the standpoint of others and include this information in the self-appraisal (Duval & Lalwani, 1999). This can be referred to as other-awareness (Figurski, 1987). In order to alter one's perspective, it is important to first become aware that others have a different perspective and then adopt that perspective in relation to the self (Flavell, 1968).

As this study attempts to replicate and expand findings in a previous study of managerial self-awareness, it will also use that definition. Self-awareness is the practice of reflecting on and accurately assessing one's own behaviors and skills as they are manifested in workplace interactions (Church, 1997). This definition does not include actually using this information to modify behaviors, as that is beyond the scope of this study. However, it is evident that many managers use the information they perceive to modify future behavior.

Figurski (1987) identified four different kinds of person-awareness. Although not mutually exclusive, defining the four types will bring clarity to this study's definition of self-awareness. As seen in Figure 1, the three main dimensions of person-awareness are target, perspective, and content. Perspective or tacit awareness (egocentric or allocentric) interacts with the target or focal awareness (self or other) to yield the orientation and content of awareness. Four categories of attention result: self-experience awareness, self-

image awareness, other-image awareness, and other-experience awareness. These can occur together in any combination or simultaneously.

Figure 1. Figurski's Model of Person Awareness

		TARGET	
		Self	Other
PERSPECTIVE	Egocentric	Self Experience Awareness (Internal)	Other Image Awareness (External)
	Allocentric	Self Image Awareness (External)	Other Experience Awareness (Internal)

The allocentric perspective results when one examines how others perceive him or her when the self is the target. When others are the targets of attention, one is considering what others are feeling. It is necessary to first consider another person's internal experience before one can adopt that person's perspective. Therefore objective self-awareness is dependent upon the consideration of others' experiences.

Problems may arise for those who fail to integrate information from the egocentric and allocentric perspectives. If the experiences of other people are not adequately considered, there will be less understanding between the self and others resulting in less effective communication (Wegner & Giuliano, 1982). On the other hand, one who considers the experiences of others towards themselves and integrates that

information with how they perceive the self should experience communication that is more effective.

In a study of the frequency of use of the four categories of attention, Figurski (1987) found that the rate of frequency of self-awareness of both image (77 percent) and experience (88 percent) is very high. Other-awareness had lower frequency rates for image (69 percent) and experience (49 percent). These figures indicate that people are aware of others' experiences almost fifty percent of the time. The self, as expected, proves to be the dominant focus of attention.

Although managers are focusing the majority of their attention to the self, they are not able to accurately judge their own behaviors. As stated above, self-ratings are thought to be unreliable indicators of behavior for various reasons. However, self-ratings are important, in that they portray meaningful information about the rater (Furnham & Stringfield, 1994).

For example, there are characteristics thought to be related to accurate self-evaluation. Mabe and West (1982) found that intelligence, high achievement status, and internal locus of control were positively associated with more accurate self-evaluations. Individuals with preference for Sensing and Introversion on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator have also been found to have more accurate perceptions than those with other preferences (Roush & Atwater, 1992). Introversion is an attitude preference for directing energy to the inner world of thoughts and reflection. Sensing is a preference for taking in information in the form of facts and details as opposed to pattern and theory.

It has been shown in previous studies that the greater the individual's level of self-awareness, the more congruence that is expected between the manager's assessment of the self and the ratings provided by peers. Numerous other studies have linked various managerial characteristics to more accurate self-evaluations. Less applied research has focused on the self-other ratings congruence and its link to effectiveness in a managerial position. The discrepancy between self- and other-ratings is also empirically unclear. For example, an elevation in self-ratings could be due to lower ratings in others rather than over-estimation by the self.

Atwater and Yammarino (1992) conducted one study that has focused on the above issues. They sought to determine how self-awareness affects the degree of relationship between leadership behavior and its predictors, and between leader behavior and performance outcomes. Four measures of ability (verbal and math SAT scores, recommendations, and engineering/science interest survey) and three measures of experience (conduct at the academy, leadership positions held, and athletic participation) were gathered. After participants' data was collected, they were categorized based on the magnitude of difference scores into three categories: under-estimator, in-agreement, or over-estimator for each rater group (superior and subordinate).

Upon comparison of self- and other-ratings, it was found that average self-ratings of leadership were higher than subordinates' and superiors' ratings. To account for which type of rater accounts for the category differences, the average self-rating was compared to the mean subordinate and mean superior rating. It was found that inaccurate self-raters that over-estimate their own performance tend to show poorer performance than people

who are more accurate self-raters. Additionally, their peers rated over-raters lowest.

Those categorized as under-raters were rated higher by others than those categorized as in-agreement.

The moderators of leadership behavior were found by correlating predictors of leadership (ability and experience scores) and transformational leadership. For over-estimators, ability and experience tend to correlate negatively to leadership. However, under-estimators' predictor scores are positively correlated to leadership behaviors. This may be because the under-estimators are more likely to use information from their abilities and experiences to change their behaviors, whereas over-estimators are not. In other words, self-aware individuals appear to be using direct and indirect feedback to modify behavior. Over-estimators, however, seem to be using this information to confirm or justify their self-misperception of over-achieving.

Although this research sheds more light on the topic of self-awareness by distinguishing differences between different types of raters, self-awareness was not addressed as a moderator of predictor/leader relationships. The sample sizes were also small, indicating a need for further research on this topic.

Van Velsor, Taylor, and Leslie (1993) expanded upon Atwater and Yammarino's work by exploring self-awareness (self-rater agreement) using three different managerial samples of hospital administrators who participated in a multi-rater survey. They studied how self-awareness relates to self-rater agreement. Raters were divided into the same categories used in the above study (under-rater, accurate rater, or over-rater).

In an attempt to determine what accounts for the discrepancy between self- and other- ratings, they found, as did Atwater and Yammarino (1992), that across all three samples the discrepancy in rating is due to differences on both self- and other-ratings. Therefore, the elevation in over-raters is not a function of lower ratings by others, and lower ratings in under-raters are not due to higher ratings by others.

Van Velsor et al. used a four item benchmark scale to determine a manager's self-awareness including items on how well one "knows the self" and how "willing to improve" they are. The researchers expected the accurate raters to score the highest on these two dimensions, in accordance with their definition of self-awareness. However, under-raters outperformed accurate raters and over-raters. There was also a gender difference, where females outperformed male counterparts on the "knows self" subscale.

This study does not support or disprove that the difference in self- and others-ratings is an accurate way to operationalize managerial self-awareness. It is also unclear if direct reports' accounts are unduly influenced by other managerial characteristics such as humility, confounding the operational definition of managerial self-awareness. However, this research does indicate an interesting gender difference deserving further investigation.

In order to investigate a direct link between self-awareness and leadership, Church (1997) further expanded upon the previous studies using samples from various organizations that are more representative of general management than previous studies. The sectors included were from technology, pharmaceutical, and transportation industries. Participants completed multi-rater surveys in connection with a training

seminar, and were labeled as high-performers or average performers based on separate performance assessment information.

The hypothesis that high-performing managers are more self-aware (display congruence in self-other ratings) than average-performing individuals was tested using absolute average profile differences (d) as well as relative average item differences across each question. Individuals identified as high performers displayed significantly lower profile difference scores than average performers in both the profile difference scores, and for the average item difference. This supports managerial self-awareness theory in that high performers display higher levels of self-awareness than average performers.

Church (1997) also hypothesized that behaviors rated as more important would display higher levels of congruence due to more attention placed on those items. However, the results yielded a positive relationship between difference scores and item importance, indicating that more important behaviors are associated with more disagreement between self and direct reports.

The author conducted further analyses with the categorical approach used in the previous two cited studies. This was due to concerns with difference scores (which will be discussed later in this paper). Similar results were obtained; a higher proportion of high-performers were accurate raters as compared to under- and over-raters.

Problem Statement and Presentation of Hypotheses

There have been a very limited number of empirical studies conducted that link self-awareness in managers to leadership. The studies that have been conducted in the past have had relatively small sample sizes and have not taken into account the work of

developmental psychologists who emphasize communication as a key link between self-awareness and performing effectively.

This study will attempt to clarify each of these issues, in order to bring more clarity to whether or not self-awareness is a key factor in high performers. It will also give more credence to the corporate practice of spending large sums of money on developing feedback instruments that promote self-awareness in management employees. In summary, the following research questions will be examined:

- 1a. Are high-performers necessarily more self-aware than average-performers? 1b. Is managerial self-awareness related to overall leadership?
2. Will the communication competency have a stronger relationship to self-awareness in managers than other competencies due to its importance in development?
3. What moderating variables (such as data source) affect managerial self-awareness?

Individuals who are self-aware are more likely to respond to information from past experiences, thereby becoming more effective and displaying more leadership strengths. There will be a significant relationship between overall managerial leadership effectiveness and congruence in self-other ratings. Individuals perceived by their managers as being high performers will be more self-aware. **This will be manifested in high performers receiving higher congruence in self-other ratings compared to average performing managers (Hypothesis 1a).** In addition, **there will be a correlation between the overall leadership measure and higher congruence scores (Hypothesis 1b).**

In the event that a manager is not self-aware, information on how others perceive the self is not utilized. According to the Figurski (1987) model, the allocentric perspective must be utilized in order for one to be aware of how the self is considered by others. Failure to consider the similarity or differences between the self and others results in perspectives that vary. Effective communication is in turn hindered, because the understanding between people is not clear. Conversely, those who communicate effectively are using information gathered from interactions with others. **It is therefore expected that managers with higher communication scores will display more congruent performance data (as reflected in self-rater agreement). (Hypothesis 2.)**

Previous studies have found that different rater groups draw from different experiences when filling out an individual's performance review, and therefore results can differ by data source (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Borman, 1974; Zalesney & Kirsch, 1989). Furthermore, individuals tend to focus more on feedback they receive from their managers versus peers or others. **Data source (self, manager, peer, and other) is expected to explain variance in self-awareness levels. (Hypothesis 3.)**

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

Archival data was collected from employees for 35 high performing individuals and 35 average performing individuals from a population of middle level managers working in an airline located in the southwestern region of the United States. A total of 977 surveys were collected for those 70 managers, including data from managers, direct reports, peers, internal and external customers (referred to as others), and the managers themselves. All of the individuals involved must have been in their current position for a minimum of one year and have at least three direct reports. Participation was not mandatory, but was strongly encouraged by the CEO of the company.

Distribution of all materials was anonymous, with respondents sending completed materials to an external firm that handled the compilation of data as well as the feedback reports to individuals. The home address was used when the firm sent materials such as the initial packet and final report to ensure confidentiality. Reinforcing a confidential atmosphere helped contribute to the respondents answering as honestly as possible.

Individuals were assigned a designation of high performer or average performer based on information provided by their managers. This designation was not communicated to anyone inside the organization, so that the label high performer or average performer could not influence the ratings obtained from managers or direct reports.

Instrument

The multi-rater instrument was developed based on a model developed by internal and external consultants. The model is composed of 14 competencies based on company-wide culture surveys, input from upper level managers, and the mission of the organization.

A pilot study was conducted to determine if all items were related to performance and produced consistent outcomes. Forty managers participated as well as at least three direct reports for each manager and a supervisor for each. Additionally, focus groups were used with a cross-section of managers to verify the competencies and items were relevant and had face validity. Subsequent statistical and item-response techniques were used, whereby item means were compared to overall competency means.

Managers were sent a packet consisting of a cover letter, 20 surveys and 20 corresponding answer sheets. Each participant completed a self-questionnaire and distributed up to 19 questionnaires to their manager, direct reports, peers, and internal and external customers (others). Once completed, answer sheets were mailed or faxed to Nebraska, where the external consulting firm compiled data and generated reports. Subjects received reports within two weeks after their two-week deadline to return materials.

For analysis purposes, only managers who had at least one manager, three respondents in the peer group, and three in the direct report group were used in this study. Also, not all competencies appearing on the instrument were included in this study. The original competencies were: driving for results, meeting customer expectations, making

sound decisions, effective communication, managing the business, industry knowledge, integrity, innovation, building and maintaining relationships, safety consciousness, self-management, teamwork and partnering, strategic direction, and developing others. The competencies included in this study were rated the most critical in a job analysis of management employees at the company in question. They were also the competencies that were most highly correlated with leadership in the pilot study. These include:

I) Making Sound Decisions- Ability to gather and synthesize large amounts of information and consider a wide range of alternatives in problem solving; understands complexities and relationships among issues; ability to make timely decisions even in ambiguous situations. Stays informed by actively seeking information.

II) Driving for Results- Takes initiative and works diligently to achieve results despite obstacles; stays consistently productive. Conveys appropriate level of urgency and motivates others to achieve results.

III) Effective Communication- Clearly and concisely expresses self in written and oral communications. Listens to others and encourages the expression of different points of view. Delivers clear and impactful messages.

IV) Self-Management- Actively seeks feedback from others; aware of strengths and non-strengths and manages them accordingly. Seeks opportunities to improve.

Demonstrates resilience in difficult situations; copes well with stress and maintains life/work balance. Maintains high personal expectations for achievement.

V) Innovation- Sees opportunities for groundbreaking improvements; willing to experiment and test new ideas. Approaches problems with a flexible mindset. Generates

novel ideas and solutions. Stimulates creative ideas in others. Challenges the “way it has been done” attitude.

VI) Overall Leadership Effectiveness- With respect to all aspects of management and leadership that are important to me, this person is an outstanding leader.

The item that was used to operationalize the manager’s leadership is the “overall leadership” competency. The scale used for all items is a five-point scale with descriptors reading Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5). A “Cannot Rate” category was included for those unable or unwilling to rate any particular item.

Statistical Analyses

Self-awareness was operationalized as the congruence between self-ratings and others’ average ratings across competencies. It is statistically possible to obtain these figures with various different approaches. For example, Atwater and Yammarino (1992) as well as Van Velsor et al. (1993) used category assignments based on the magnitude of differences between self and subordinate ratings to determine self-awareness. Specifically, the deviation from the mean difference was used to determine which of the three agreement labels should be assigned. This approach is measuring the general rating tendency of a manager, not the “cumulative degree of congruence across rating a series of specific comparisons” (Church, 1997, p. 5).

The Pearson correlation between self-score average and others’ ratings average can also be calculated as a self-other congruence measure (Norwack, 1992). However,

this method is also not a useful measure of self-awareness because it yields the standing on the entire instrument, not agreement in individual ratings.

This study used a difference score approach developed by Church (1997) to obtain more statistically sensitive results. One method used by Church is where difference scores were calculated using relative item difference between self-reports and direct reports across each of the questions. The average of the differences was then used for analyses (Ashford & Tsui, 1991). This technique has been found as valid for use in finding self-awareness scores (Church, 1997; Ashford & Tsui, 1991).

The current study used another method utilized by Church (1997) referred to as average profile difference. This index is calculated by obtaining the difference between the self-score and the average direct report score, then dividing by the number of items in the particular sample. The absolute difference is found by squaring and then taking the square root of the sum (Nunnally, 1978). This method of difference score analysis is particularly sensitive to shape and dispersion of the sample.

The high-performance group was obtained by asking managers for a list of their top performers based on previous assessments of performance. Average performers were a random sample from the remaining population of managers, excluding those selected for the high-performance group. Because an individual's performance group designation was determined by their manager, the manager's scores were not used to obtain the difference scores. Only direct report's scores were calculated into the d-score.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Null Hypothesis 1

For examination of the first hypothesis, two different analyses were conducted. First, to test the null hypothesis 1a that no significant difference exists between the managerial self-awareness of high performers and average performers, an independent sample t -test was performed. The continuous criterion measure was the difference scores (d) and the categorical measure was performance group (high or average). It should be noted that as stated above, only direct report and self scores were used to calculate difference scores. The high performing managers ($M = 11.61$, $SD = 6.74$) were found to have less congruence with others than the randomly selected managers ($M = 8.59$, $SD = 7.99$). Contrary to what was expected, this finding was not significant $F(1, 69) = .133$, $p = .72$.

The second analysis was performed to test hypothesis 1b. The correlation between the overall leadership measure and difference scores was found to be not significant ($r = .05$, $p = .69$). This demonstrates that there is not a relationship between being perceived as an effective leader and having more congruence between self-scores and others' scores (managerial self-awareness).

Null Hypothesis 2

To test the null hypothesis that managers with higher communication scores will not display more congruent performance data (as reflected in self-rater agreement) than other competency scores, a correlational approach was used. The Pearson correlation

between each of the competencies (making sound decisions, driving for results, effective communication, self-management, and innovation) and the difference scores (\underline{d}) was calculated and results were compared to one another. As indicated in Table 2, all competencies were negatively correlated to difference scores, indicating that more congruence between self and other ratings is associated with higher competency scores. Communication follows this pattern as well ($r = -.14$, $p < .01$), however, decision-making has a slightly higher correlation to difference scores than does communication ($r = -.18$, $p < .01$). Other competencies also demonstrated similar coefficients.

Table 2

Intercorrelations for Competency Scores and Difference Scores

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Decision Making	--					
2. Driving for Results	.69*	--				
3. Communication	.63*	.51*	--			
4. Self Management	.63*	.55*	.72*	--		
5. Innovation	.63*	.51*	.74*	.74*	--	
6. Difference Score (\underline{d})	-.18	-.10	-.14	-.10	-.13	--

Note. * coefficients are significant at $p < .01$. Negative correlation with \underline{d} scores indicate greater MSA levels.

Null Hypothesis 3

A factorial ANOVA model was used to determine whether or not data source (peer, manager, direct report, self, and others) is related to the degree of displayed self-

awareness. The null hypothesis predicts that data source does not account for variance in self-awareness levels. An ANOVA was performed with data source (peer, manager, direct report, self, and others) where the dependent variable was the difference scores. The range of scores is from 0 to 74 out of a possible range of 0 to 325. The results indicate there is a statistically significant difference between the various rater groups $F(4, 870) = 26.95, p < .001$. However, post-hoc tests indicate that each of the groups is significantly different from the self, but none of the other groups differ significantly from one another.

Table 3

Table of Means and Standard Deviations by Rater Group

Rater Group	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Peer	11.91	9.73
Manager	9.88	6.94
Direct Report	10.12	7.49
Self	0.00	0.00
Others	11.36	9.76
Overall	11.73	10.95

Note. Scores indicate the mean difference between the absolute value of the self-scores and the other group's scores.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

One of the questions this study sought to answer was whether or not high performers differ from average performers in the degree of displayed managerial self-awareness. The hypothesis being tested in this case was that high performers would be found to have more congruence between self-rated performance and others' ratings than other managers. This result was expected because managers who are more self-aware are likely perceived as being better leaders than those who display less self-awareness.

However, the test of the hypothesis revealed that statistical differences do not exist between high performers and average performers. High performers displayed non-significantly lower levels of managerial self-awareness. Managers high in overall leadership did not tend to have greater self-awareness levels as expected. This study was intended to replicate previous findings and extend the results in the area of managerial self-awareness, however results contradict previous research (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992; Church 1997).

One reason this may be the case is the way participants were assigned the label "high performer" or "average performer". Managers were asked to choose their top performers, and the average performers were selected randomly from the remainder of the population. However, a comparison of the managers' ratings indicates a lack of statistical difference in the way the high performers ($\underline{M} = 115.68$, $\underline{SD} = 9.19$) and average performers ($\underline{M} = 110.00$, $\underline{SD} = 8.77$) were rated $\underline{F}(1, 69) = .71$, $\underline{p} = .40$. This

indicates that the high performer versus average performer label is not necessarily congruent with the way participants were rated on this multi-rater instrument.

In addition to attempting to contribute to construct validity, the current study endeavored to extend the construct of managerial self-awareness by drawing connections between developmental psychological research and managerial self-awareness. Objective self-evaluation is possible only after children have begun to focus attention away from the self, and can take on the point of view of others (Mead 1934; Duval & Wicklund, 1972). With age, the evaluation of others' perspectives becomes more natural, and communication is enhanced. Therefore, it was hypothesized that communication would be a competency that those who are more self-aware would display at higher levels than those who are less self-aware.

There was no significant correlation between communication and managerial self-awareness, and other competencies such as making sound decisions and innovation were also not significantly correlated to self-awareness. This result is likely due to all of the competencies being sub-categories of leadership. The overlap in competencies makes it unlikely that there will be significant differences between them.

Additionally, there are a myriad of factors that contribute to a person's managerial self-awareness. Further theoretical modeling is necessary to map how various leadership competencies are related to self-awareness. Communication may be a link between self-awareness and performance, but it is unclear how this relates to other competencies theoretically.

The third question this study sought to answer was whether different rater sources (self, manager, peer, and other) were related to the degree of managerial self-awareness displayed. The hypothesis being tested was that variance in managerial self-awareness would be accounted for by rater group.

This was expected because each of these groups likely draws from different experiences and situations when completing a survey on the ratee. Ratings of behavior are not the same thing as actual behavior. The rater has perceptions of the behavior, which may not always accurately reflect reality because perceptions can be influenced by many factors in addition to behavior. It is likely that those in the same rater group would share more of the same kinds of interactions with the ratee, and therefore rate him or her more similarly than those in other rater groups. Results did not lend support to this hypothesis. This may be because the ratee's self-awareness level is relatively stable across various interactions.

Implications

Managers who are more aligned with co-workers do not appear to be perceived as better leaders. Although this is only one aspect of leadership, many organizational resources have been devoted to efforts which target this area. Currently this is being accomplished in some organizations using multi-rater instruments, feedback sessions involving a variety of data sources, assessment centers, and/or a combination of these tools and many others. This study indicates that these efforts may not be justified based solely on managerial self-awareness improvement as other researchers have suggested. However, these efforts do assist in other ways. For example, a larger sample of raters

likely leads to a more accurate portrayal of reality. Furthermore, companies not engaging in developing systems whereby managers can be made more aware of their performance should consider doing so.

Multi-rater instruments may even act as a method for increasing self-awareness for those who are not aligned with what others think of their performance, as it may help them more accurately assess what others think of their behaviors. This allows them to improve in areas where less than desirable behaviors have been exhibited. However, it is likely that the behavior improvement will be limited in those who fail to link multi-rater feedback results to specific targeted behaviors.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are also possible reasons why results were incongruent with previous research. These limiting factors include the possible lack of generalizability of the data due to a sample that is not representative of managers as a group. In addition, there are likely restriction of range problems, as the participants were all either average or high performing managers, and no low performing managers were included. The way that the “high performer” and “average performer” labels were assigned also raises questions, and future studies should consider using different methods. In this study there was a lack of congruence between high and average performer labels and how people were actually rated. Lastly, the leadership measure was based on only one item, which may be more limiting than it should be.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although a growing number of studies examine managerial self-awareness, there exists a lack of longitudinal data. Studies that investigate the stability of self-awareness are needed to establish that it is stable over time. Also, longitudinal research would permit more accurate measures of self-awareness. For example, an increase in self-scores and other scores over time may be a better indicator of being self-aware than the congruence at one administration of the instrument.

The instrument used to measure self-awareness is also designed to change it. The measurement itself may be having an effect on behavior. Future studies should consider use of the Solomon four group design (Solomon, 1949), which could control testing effects that may occur.

A theoretical model including self-awareness, as well as moderators such as the perceived importance of the behavior being rated is needed. Links have been found between managerial characteristics such as intelligence, and high achievement status, and managerial self-awareness. These have all been found to be associated with leadership, indicating further research needed to develop accurate models of how managerial self-awareness and leadership effectiveness are linked.

APPENDIX A
MULTI-RATER INSTRUMENT

Multi-Rater Survey

SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral or Undecided, A=Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

Making Sound Decisions-

This person:

1. Adds direction to ambiguous situations.
2. Digs deep to gather input and information for decision making.
3. Makes timely decisions.
4. Evaluates alternative solutions.
5. Uses sound judgment to make good decisions.

Driving for Results-

This person:

6. Provides clear direction.
7. Expects the best from others.
8. Is assertive when necessary.
9. Takes charge when appropriate to make things happen.

Effective Communication-

This person:

10. Listens to the ideas and opinions of others.
11. Demonstrates openness to different perspectives.
12. Communicates his/her point of view effectively.
13. Projects a poised, credible image.
14. Is persuasive when necessary.

15. Facilitates open, two-way communication.

Self-Management-

This person:

16. Understands and maximizes his/her strengths.

17. Understands and acknowledges his/her non-strengths and limitations.

18. Seeks input from others.

19. Handles stress and pressure situations with composure.

20. Utilizes feedback to improve performance.

21. Maintains challenging self-expectations and high standards.

Innovation-

This person:

22. Adapts to change effectively.

23. Demonstrates a willingness to change.

24. Shares innovative ideas.

25. Supports the creative ideas of others.

26. Maintains a flexible and open approach to problem solving.

Overall Leadership

27. With respect to all aspects of management and leadership that are important to me,
this person is an outstanding leader.

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